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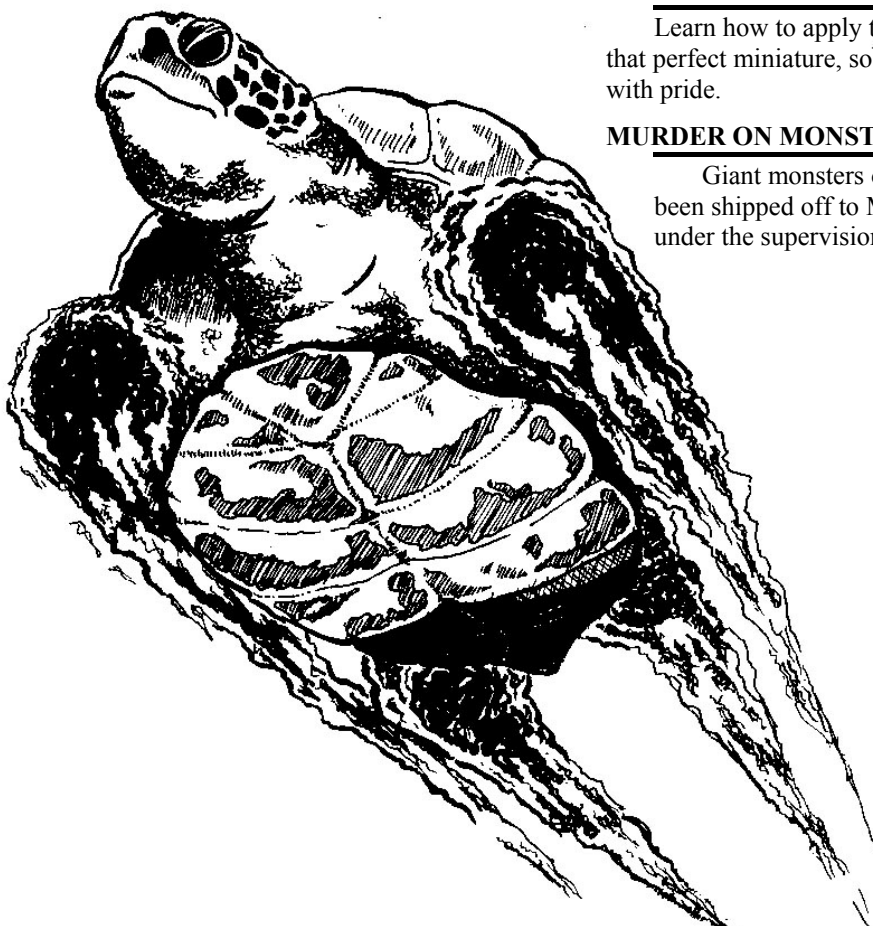
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# Deathtraps by Michael Wallwork

## Building the Classic Deathtrap

One of the things that has disappeared from both comics and roleplaying games in recent years is the classic deathtrap. A staple in comic books, movies, and television series for years, it has become a casualty of the movement toward more “realistic” storytelling – as if there was anything realistic about mutants with powers to change the world, aliens who fly around with no apparent source of propulsion, or people gaining fantastic powers from lab accidents.

In roleplaying games, one of the biggest problems has been the large groups. Deathtraps are more commonly built for one or two heroes, and gaming groups are normally 4 to 6 players. However, a little ingenuity and expanding the size of the deathtrap can allow you to re-introduce this fun and classic bit into your Champions campaign. In building the deathtrap, we have to consider four aspects of the trap – the mechanism, the special effect (aka the signature), the damage, and the method of escape.

## The Mechanism

The classic deathtrap can employ almost any mechanism. Indeed, one of the things that made the deathtrap such an attraction was the bizarre nature of the devices employed by the villain. Often (but not always) involving a super scientific gizmo, most deathtraps still fit into one of a handful of archetype categories.

First up is “the conveyor.” In this deathtrap, the hero is secured to a conveyor belt or some other moving apparatus which slowly moves the character towards a looming instrument of death which could be a buzz saw, a furnace, or even a printing press. Anything capable of causing a quick and messy death will work.

The opposite of the conveyor is “the chains.” In this case, the hero is chained to a wall, floor, or some other solid and stationary object and the instrument of death slowly moves closer, often one “notch” at a time. In this case, a saw may slowly lower down toward a character strapped to a table or a laser may slowly move toward the character. This also works for more dramatic deathtraps. For example, the character might be chained up underneath a rocket that is counting down to blast off.

Next up is “the box” which is occasionally combined with the chains. In this situation, the character is imprisoned – possibly in a room but any sort of impenetrable container works well. Some slow working mechanism is then triggered which is designed to kill the character such as poisoned gas, a drastic temperature increase or decrease, or a drowning agent.

The fourth and fifth forms are very much related. They are “the pit” and “the vat.” In each case, the hero is normally suspended over something destined to cause certain death – be it a vat of boiling oil or acid, or a bit with a laser grid guaranteed to cut the character to ribbons. Live animals, such as a tank full of sharks or a pit filled with lions or tiger are also quite popular in street level Champions or heroic level games.

The final mechanism is the puzzle. Mazes laden with deadly devices or occupied by monstrous creatures fit into this category. But the puzzle often borrows other mechanisms as well, especially the box. Trapping the characters in a room or a part of a room where the release button for the trap is inaccessible is a staple form of the puzzle. For instance, the release button might be located on the opposite end of the room, protected by a laser grid, a nightingale floor, or even simply bulletproof glass. Power levels will dictate the exact defenses.

## Special Effect

Just as essential as the deathtrap’s basic mechanism is the special effect that is applied to it. The special effect comes from the villain’s motif and is what makes the trap unique. So the Master of Time might imprison our heroes in the bottom of an hourglass then drop sand from the top to suffocate our heroes. On the other hand, Dr. Ice might trap the heroes in a giant freezer. You have to put some thought into the special effect because this, more than anything else, is what will make the trap seem unique. Remember, there are only a handful of mechanisms; it is the special effect which differentiates one villain’s “chains” trap from another’s.

## Determining Damage

The deathtrap is usually meant to be lethal, so the damage should generally be enough to kill the character quickly (one or two damage rolls) if the heroes are unable to escape. Most often, this will take the form of large Killing Attacks and NNDs. Again, the special effect is key. Weapons, be they saws, giant lasers, or printing presses are normally built as killing attacks. Environmental effects such as excessive temperatures, drowning, or suffocation should be built with NNDs. If the trap is not meant to be lethal, it still needs to be able to accomplish its purpose in only a few rolls. Gradual effects (built with the Continuous Advantage) which take one turn or so to accomplish are good for this. You may also need to use Trigger or Extra Time (or both) to determine when the trap activates and the damage is applied.

# Murder on Monster Island

 by John Ivicsek Jr.

*A Murder on Monster Island* is a two-part article. It is a standard adventure, but it also serves as a mini-sourcebook on the Bureau 17 facility located on that famous isle.

Note: Occasionally the term *Kaiju* is used in this article. For those not familiar, it is a generic term for a Really Big Monster.

## Adventure Background

In 1965, the Qularr hit upon what they thought was a sure fire way to takeover that annoyingly resilient Earth. If they couldn't outman the forces defending the planet, they'd simply overpower them. And moreover, they'd do it with creatures from our planet so that they would be at minimal risk. It was a good plan, just not a foolproof one. Earth's superheroes (and in some cases, supervillains) sprung to the defense. It was a long and hard fought battle, but in the end, the Earth forces were able to drive the rampaging monsters back to the Qularr base and drive the Qularr themselves, back into space.

Utilizing the sophisticated technology that the invaders had abandoned, Earth scientists were able to erect an almost invincible force shield over the island. With the monsters still confined inside of it, Earth was again safe.

Over time, the care of the island and maintenance of its machinery passed to the Japanese after a suitably long period of international wrangling in the United Nations. The threat was premiere in the minds of the Japanese as "Monster Island" as it had been dubbed, was only about a hundred miles away and the inhabitants had a predilection for smashing cities. In the end it came down to money. Japan was willing to finance the existing Qularr structure as well as expanding it into a fully functional science center. They also were willing to become the first line of defense against the monsters, a task few relished.

While there have been break-outs from time to time, the general functioning of Monster island can only be considered an unparalleled success. But all of that is now in jeopardy.

Two weeks before the start of the adventure, the regular Security Chief, Kenji Takumaru, was in Tokyo on leave. During that time he was replaced by Masquerade. Assuming his identity, Masquerade has returned to Monster Island and begun to fulfill its current contract. This is nothing less than getting copies of all the data files currently stored on the island, as well as obtaining a suitable bio-sample from one of the Monsters themselves.

Upon entering the base, Masquerade feigned a slight illness; just enough to explain some odd behavior, but not enough to warrant being sent

back home. As the days carried on, Masquerade began a slow but systematic back-up of every data file in the computer network. It was done quietly and in bits and pieces over several nights and it looked like routine architecture checking at a casual glance.

The next part of the plan was far more audacious. Masquerade had been contracted to get a genetic sample. But not from just any Giant Monster, no he had been contracted to get a sample from "Sergeant Nuke." The Sergeant had been transformed when the Qularr first moved their monsters across the planet. In the deep reaches of the Bikini Atolls, he along with a few others with the bad luck of being in the wrong place at the wrong time got to see the Monster Gonjiras destroyed by a Hydrogen Bomb just seconds before they too were flash fried. But instead of dying, something peculiar happened and Sergeant Nuke grew to massive proportions (60m) while losing any semblance of restraint. In his confused mind he felt that he had been setup, that the people dropping the bomb KNEW he had been there and dropped anyway! As the last of his mind slipped away to rage, the Sergeant started swimming to Pearl Harbor. Barely stopped by the US Fleet, one thing was noticed; Sergeant Nuke had incredible regenerative capabilities. He wasn't as hard to hurt, but he was just as hard to knock down as the other monsters. And this is why his sample was the one requested.

Four days before the adventure begins, Masquerade leads a perimeter check of the island. On the way, he manages to fake engine failure on his helicopter and gets his men to one of the safety hideouts dotting the island while he "goes for help." Acting quickly, Masquerade located Sergeant Nuke and launched a bazooka sized probe at him. The only problem was one of over-estimation. Since it had never been tried, no one realized that Sergeant Nuke was hideously vulnerable to poison...specifically the poison that was supposed to render him immobile so that Masquerade could retrieve the probe.

Not knowing anything was really wrong; Masquerade retrieved the probe, hid it on the island for later pick-up, and returned to his men after signaling for help. They were retrieved along with the helicopter, and all was going according to plan.

Two days before adventure start, the technicians monitoring the monsters noticed that Sergeant Nuke hadn't been seen in any of his usual haunts. Repositioning the cameras gained

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author would like to thank Bob Dorf for his help in constructing a default Kaiju template. Feel free to also blame him when your PC gets stomped.

Additionally, I'd like to thank DOJ for letting me have fun with Monster Island and Steve Long and Darren Watts for including it in *Champions Universe*.

## MASQUERADE AND OTHER VILLAINS

The main villain that the PCs will interact with in this adventure is Masquerade from *Conquerors, Killers and Crooks*, page 172. If you wish to substitute your own villain, it should be someone capable of impersonation on a level that is nigh-undetected. Since Monster Island works so closely with Supers on a regular basis, Masquerade purchased a small device in order to hide the one potential weakness in his/her impersonation, Telepathy.

Masquerade has purchased a small mechanical mental shield from Utility (CKC, page 211) expressly for this mission. It has the following statistics:

*Mental Defense: 10 points Mental Defense. IIF (Small Patch at Base of*

